

William Stansby's Early Career

by James K. Bracken

Heretofore the date of William Stansby's succession to the mastership of the Cross Keys printing house of his former master John Windet is thought to have been about 1615. R. B. McKerrow, in his *Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of Foreign Printers of English Books, 1557-1640*, noted that Stansby "appears to have been taken into partnership by his former master, at whose death about 1615, he succeeded to the business."¹ In his portrait of John Windet, however, McKerrow was less precise about the date of Stansby's succession: "The last book entry under his [Windet's] name is found on May 14th, 1604; but he continued in business until 1611 when he assigned over his copyrights to William Stansby, who ultimately succeeded to the business" (*Dictionary*, p. 295). Evidence showing that McKerrow was incorrect in dating Windet's death about 1615 and, consequently, mistaken in placing Stansby's succession in the same year, although right in assuming that they had entered into a partnership, appears in Windet's will.² The will, tested on 21 November 1610, was probated on 8 January 1611, showing that Windet had certainly died between these dates. Furthermore, the will shows, first, that Windet and Stansby had previously agreed to a partnership in which Stansby owned half of the printing instruments of the Cross Keys as well as half of Windet's completed but unsold books, partially completed books, and manuscripts yet to be printed; and, second, that the remainder of Windet's professional property was to be offered to Stansby for purchase at a price established by Windet's executors. The second point of Windet's will is as follows:³

Item I give & bequeath to my saide sisters [Elizabeth Goarde, wife of John Goarde, a London barber-surgeon, and Mary Bowles, wife of John Bowles, a Devonshire tailor] all my part or porcion of my printinge stuffe or instrumentes for printinge nowe in my tenure, or in the tenure or occupacion of William Stansbie Cittizen and Stacioner of London whoe is nowe Copartner with me in printinge as by certaine Covenantes made betweene us both touchinge the same at large appeareth[.] All which saide printinge stuffe or Instrumentes for printings, as presses, letters, Cases, Chases[,] borders, cast or cut letters, unites markes[,] composinge stickes, flowers, gallies paperbordes or other thinge or things, necessarie or necessities whatsoever nowe used occupied or ymploied or hereafter to be used occupied or imployed by what name or names the same shalbe of or shalbe called in or about the saide printinge house or other rooms belonginges to the same[.] All which saide goodes debtes and chattels whatsoever my will and minde is that they shalbe within three daies after my deathe and chattels whatsoever my will and minde is that they shalbe within three daies after my deathe equallie divided between the saide William Stansbye and my Executor to the use of my saide twoe sisters except the saide William Stansbye will buye the same at such price or prices as by discrecion of mr Thomas Dawson or mr Adam Islyp shalbe thought fitt and meete to be given for the same, And if the saide William Stansby doe refuse to buye or take the same at such rate

or price as the saide mr Dawson and mr Isylyppe shall thincke fitt to agree upon, Then my will and minde is that the small equall parte or porcion belonginge or apperteyninge to my saide sisters shalbe solde to the Companie of Stacioners or printers within the Cittie of London, And if the saide Companie shall refuse to buye the same Then my will and minde is that the same shallbe solde or otherwise disposed of to the most benefitt and advantage of my saide Sisters at the discrecion of my executor[.] ffurthermore my will and minde is that all such printed or imprinted paper bookes perfect or books imperfect or anie other thinge or thinges matter or matters, copie or copies, or anie scriptes, scrowles papers or other writinges or anie manner of thinge or thinges apperteyninge to us both nowe in my lifytyme by wait of Copartnershipp that the same shall likewise be equallie devided betwixt the saide William Stansbye and myne Executor to the use of my saide sisters as aforesaid rate and ratelike.

The details of Windet's will allow the events of Stansby's early career to be reexamined in new light. Stansby began his career as an apprentice to John Windet in the Cross Keys on Christmas 1590.⁴ Admitted a freeman on 7 January 1597 (Arber, II, 717), Stansby evidently went into business for himself, although remaining closely associated with Windet. On 28 April 1597 -- only three months after he was made a freeman -- Stansby entered his first book copy, *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (Arber, III, 83), which he published in the same year (STC 24335). The book's imprint, "Printed by John Windet for W. S. and are to be soulded at Powles Wharfe at the signe of the Crosse Keyes," suggests that Windet greatly aided Stansby in the publication. Stansby's name as publisher appears in the colophon. Stansby was then apparently content to labor quietly in Windet's printing house for the next decade.⁵ After 1607, however, numerous books can be attributed to Stansby as a printer. Since he owned no press, Stansby probably about this time entered into the partnership with Windet which enabled him to use the resources of the Cross Keys for his own benefit. The earliest book whose printing has been attributed to Stansby is *The Iesuites Play at Lyons* (STC 21514), which was published by Nathaniel Butter in 1607.⁶ The book's imprint does not identify the printer. Stansby's initials as the printer appear in the imprint of the fourth edition of *Politeuphuia* (STC 15687), published by John Smethwicke in 1608. Stansby's name as a printer begins to appear regularly in the imprints of books published in 1609. Eight books can be attributed to him in this year and another twelve in 1610, while twenty-seven can be attributed to Windet in these years. Stansby's new prominence and, doubtless, Windet's decline in the activities of the Cross Keys are indicated on 21 June 1610 when Stansby bound Robert Lightburne as an apprentice for a term of eight years.⁷ In binding an apprentice, Stansby assumed a right of only those freemen who were masters. Within months Windet would be dead and Stansby apparently in full control of the Cross Keys. In 1611 Stansby began vigorously printing for other stationers, entering book copies, and undertaking publications on his own account. Twenty-three books can be attributed to Stansby in 1611, eight of which he published on his own or in partnership with other stationers. On 1 April 1611 Stansby registered his first book copy since 1597, *The Tocsin, or Watch-bell* (Arber, III, 456), which he printed for Edward White (STC 1845) in the same year. On 11 September 1611 some forty-seven full and partial copyrights which were formerly Windet's were assigned to Stansby (Arber, III, 466-67). With this assignment it appears that Stansby's succession to Windet's business was made complete. Stansby already owned Windet's professional property. He now acquired Windet's most valuable copyrights as well.

The tremendous productivity of the Cross Keys printing house in 1611 and afterwards can be credited solely to Stansby. Some 104 books can be attributed to him in the period 1611-15. Three-quarters of these, seventy-eight in number, Stansby printed for other stationers, the remaining quarter, some twenty-six, being his own publications. Among the books which Stansby produced in this period are some significant folios -- Richard Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (STC 13714) of 1611; Thomas Fougasses' *The Generall Historie of the Magnificent State of Venice* (STC 11207) of 1612 (shared with George Eld); Samuel Purchas' *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (STC 20505 and 20506) of 1613 and 1614; Seneca's *Workes* (STC 22213), Walter Raleigh's *The History of the World* (STC 20637), Thomas Jackson's *The Third Booke of Commentaries vpon the Apostles Creede* (STC 14315), and William Leighton's *Teares and Lamentations of a Sorrowfull Soule* (STC 15434) of 1614; and William Camden's *Annales* (STC 4496) and William Martyn's *The Historie and Liues of Twentie Kings of England* (STC 17526 and 17527) of 1615. Following the death of Windet in late 1610 or early 1611, Stansby became solely responsible for the activities of the Cross Keys printing house. The books produced there are much to his credit.

R. B. McKerrow, *Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of Foreign Printers of English Books, 1557-1640* (1910; rpt. 1968), p. 256.

John Windet's will is in the Public Record Office, Prob. II/117, 53-55.

In the transcription, abbreviations have been expanded, with missing letters supplied in italics and superior letters lowered to the line.

Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640 A. D.* (1875-94; rpt. 1967), II, 173.

It is not certain if Stansby undertook other publications prior to 1607. Another book attributed to him in 1597 was STC 24117. The revision of the STC now assigns this to Windet. STC 16740 was attributed to Stansby in 1603. The revised STC now dates this 1625. Paul G. Morrison's *Index of Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers in A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave: A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640* (1950), has been invaluable in identifying Stansby's books.

The revised STC now attributes STC 21514 to Windet. H. R. Plomer, *A Short History of English Printing* (1900), p. 165, noted that the first book printed by Stansby was a 1609 edition of Greene's *Pandosto*.

D. F. McKenzie, "A List of Printers' Apprentices, 1605-1640," *Studies in Bibliography*, 13 (1960), 133.